** Day at The Capitol - February 19, 2019**

**Occupational Therapy:**

**The best kept secret in health care today**

**What are the benefits of Occupational Therapy (OT)?**

* *Helps people of all ages participate in the things they want and need to do through the therapeutic use of everyday activities (occupations);*
* *Creates opportunities for independent living; and*
* *Provides outcomes valued by patients, payors, and policy makers in a cost-efficient manner that is client centered, supports independence and improves quality of life.*

**Who Needs Occupational Therapy and Where Is it Provided?**

Individuals who are unable or limited in their ability to participate in activities of daily living due to their age, illness, injury or disability need OT. Occupational therapy practitioners work with clients of all ages across multiple settings, including schools, community mental health centers, hospitals, clinics and skilled nursing facilities.

**Pediatrics** Occupational therapy interventions include:

* Teaching young children and teens self-care skills, including feeding, bathing, and dressing; fine motor skills, including writing, tying shoes, and picking up small objects; and neuromotor development, including balance and coordination on curbs, steps, slides, bikes, tricycles, etc;
* Using task analysis and knowledge of sensorimotor, neurological, and musculoskeletal systems to equip an infant or toddler with the skills needed to ensure further development both physically and cognitively for the child to function in the least restrictive environment; and
* Developing life skills; for example, helping a teenager with a developmental disability gain the skills to transition from high school toward further education, employment, and independent living as an adult.

**Adults** Occupational Therapy:

* Supports independence and safety through home modifications, driving rehabilitation, and falls prevention training;
* Improves quality of life for persons with dementia and their caregivers by modifying the environment and specific stressors;
* Enhances function through rehabilitation after a stroke, surgery, or other medical incidents; and
* Supports leisure activities by helping to compensate for chronic conditions such as low vision or diabetes.

**Behavioral Health**

Occupational therapy plays a pivotal role in serving the mental health needs of people of all ages and conditions and within all settings—in the home, at school and nursing facilities, and throughout the community. Some examples of how occupational therapy assists individuals in all phases of mental health recovery are:

* Teaching and supporting the active use of coping strategies to help manage the effect of symptoms of illness on one’s life, including being more organized and able to engage in activities of choice;
* Helping to identify and implement healthy habits, rituals, and routines to support a wellness lifestyle;
* Supporting the identification of personal values, needs, and goals to enable informed decision making, such as when considering housing and employment options; and
* Providing information to increase awareness of community-based resources, such as peer-facilitated groups and other support options.

**Medicaid Pays for OT**

Federal Medicaid rules require states to include occupational therapy for children as part of the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) program, known in our state as the Texas Health Steps program. OT is also recognized as a covered service for other populations under Medicaid.